

SIMPLE HABITS FOR A STRONGER HEART

A Senior-Friendly Guide to Everyday Movement & Cardiovascular Health

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Protecting your heart doesn't require exhausting gym workouts or intense training. Simple, daily physical habits can meaningfully lower your heart disease risk, increase your stamina, and support your overall well-being. For seniors, the secret is consistent, safe, and enjoyable movement built directly into the day. Start exactly where you are, and enjoy the benefits!

Why Movement is Medicine

Every five minutes of movement per hour helps protect your heart. Moving regularly improves blood pressure, strengthens cardiac muscles, enhances balance, and lifts your mood. Whether it's housekeeping, walking the dog, or dynamic stretching—it all counts!

1. Build Movement Into Everyday Chores

You don't need to block out separate exercise time when your normal daily routine can double as a gentle workout:

- **Gentle Calf Raises:** Walk in place or do slow, controlled calf raises while brushing your teeth, doing dishes, or waiting for water to boil.
- **Light Squats:** Perform a few soft squats or gentle lunges while folding laundry, cleaning, or cooking dinner.
- **Mindful Bending:** Focus on safe, deliberate posture when bending down to pick items off the floor, engaging your legs and core for support.

2. Turn Errands Into Exercise

Errands provide a perfect structure for adding active, heart-healthy steps to your week:

- **Walk to Nearby Stores:** Choose to walk to nearby stores or pharmacies instead of driving when the weather and distance are safe.

- **Park Farther Away:** If you do drive, park in a spot farther from the entrance and take a relaxed, scenic lap around the store before you begin shopping.
- **Take the Stairs:** If you are steady on your feet and have handrails, take the stairs instead of the elevator—stair-climbing counts directly toward daily activity.

3. Reclaim Your Downtime

Leisure time is a wonderful window to nurture your heart, keeping movement fun rather than a chore:

- **TV Commercial Breaks:** March in place, do seated leg extensions, or use soft resistance bands during commercial breaks or between television episodes.
- **Take Pre-Meal Walks:** Take a quick 10-minute walk before eating your lunch or dinner. It stimulates digestion, improves circulation, and splits up long sitting periods.
- **Find Joy in Play:** Spend active time with grandchildren at the park, look after a garden, or start a small, joyful family dance party at home.

4. Establish a Daily Walking Habit

Walking is widely regarded as one of the single best cardiovascular habits. It is low-impact, highly customizable, and effective:

- **Schedule It:** Treat your daily walk like an important medical appointment. Many seniors find success walking first thing in the morning or right after dinner.
 - **Aim for 150 Minutes:** Gradually work up to 150 minutes of brisk walking per week (about 20 minutes a day). You can break this into comfortable 10-minute sessions.
 - **Progress Slowly:** Start small on flat ground. As it becomes easier, you can introduce tiny hills or a slightly faster walking pace.
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About Your Surgeon: Dr. Dimitrios G. Koudoumas, MD, PhD

Dr. Dimitrios G. Koudoumas is a dual-specialty cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon practicing at Benefis Health System in Great Falls, Montana. Originally from Greece, his passion for cardiovascular surgery was born after a close family member survived a life-threatening cardiac event following surgery. This personal connection drives his clinic philosophy: to treat every patient like a member of his own family.

Dr. Koudoumas is a strong advocate for proactive heart health, patient education, and a hybrid model of surgical care. He believes that the foundation of a healthy heart begins with simple daily habits like walking and clean movement. For advanced cases, his hybrid cardiovascular-thoracic expertise allows patients to receive comprehensive, integrated treatments, minimizing sequential surgeries.

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